

# RIGHT-SIZING AND PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS

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William N. Washington

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## Introduction

In the future, as the Army reduces staffing costs to provide funding for procurement and repair actions, we should not lose sight of our end goals in terms of readiness. That is, we should not be so focused on the cost-savings aspect that we lose sight of whether the organization retains the operational capability to accomplish its missions. This can and does happen. When it does, it becomes necessary to either rehire former employees or hire new ones to bring the organization's staff back to a sufficient readiness level. Likewise, we should minimize the personnel and organizational disruptions that occur during a right-sizing effort. This way, the remaining personnel are able to focus on their jobs rather than on anxieties about their continued employment and concerns about fellow workers. To these ends, there are basically three general concepts that can be used to minimize negative personnel impacts: involve employees early in the process, plan the right-sizing, and retain quality employees.

## Employee Involvement

By involving employees early in the process, one might be pleasantly surprised at the results. For instance, employees may be able to propose cost savings and efficiencies that were not evident to management (e.g., redesigning work processes, using alternative work hours, participating in early retirements, and accepting downgraded positions). This concept was used successfully in the airline industry when both United and Southwest Airlines saved millions of dollars by involving their personnel, as part of their stock ownership process, in ways to improve operations. This concept allows a collaborative effort rather than a one-sided approach. In addition,

secretive decision processes relative to personnel actions do not long remain so and, when they are discovered, tend to alienate employees. Further, subsequent rumors may be created that are even more destructive to morale than the intended reduction.

## Plan The Right-Sizing

First, across-the-board cuts do not usually work very well. This sacrifices planning for the sake of perceived fairness. It also relinquishes control over the direction of the organization in accomplishing its future missions. A further downside to this practice is that it can easily lead to eliminating more positions than are optimal to the organization's operation. Across-the-board cuts may result in mission failures because of a lack of knowledgeable or skilled personnel for special tasks.

Next, avoid repetitive waves of right-sizings because they can lead to lower employee morale and, subsequently, to lower productivity. Like the abovementioned across-the-board cuts, this action may also be an attempt to be "fairer" by not cutting many positions at one time, but it ends up creating an environment where employees become uncertain when the next right-sizing axe will strike.

Finally, jobs should be redesigned as part of the effort. This involves planning which jobs and functions to cut and what procedures to modify, given a smaller workforce to accomplish the missions. As part of this process, special emphasis must be given to eliminating unnecessary tasks and inefficient operations. Redesigning functions is perhaps one of the most critical considerations in a right-sizing effort because only through adapting the work processes can a more efficient and effective organization be achieved.

## Retain Quality Employees

The government has spent a considerable amount of resources on the education and training of its workforce, especially its acquisition personnel. As such, it does not make sense to consider them as billets on an expense ledger. This is demonstrated by the fact that private industry leaders usually consider government workers as key to accomplishing outsourced government missions and actively recruit both retired and current employees for their government contracts. In addition, the top talent within an organization will probably be the first to jump ship in a right-sizing process, resulting in the loss of skilled individuals from your organization. Consequently, every attempt should be made to retain the organization's most skilled personnel by involving them in the decisionmaking process during the right-sizing effort and making them aware that their skills and knowledge are both appreciated and needed.

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*WILLIAM N. WASHINGTON is an Operations Research Analyst with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Resource Management, U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command, Fort Monmouth, NJ. He has a B.S. degree from Kansas State University and an M.S. degree from Trinity University. A member of the Army Acquisition Corps since its inception, he is Level III certified in program management; business, cost estimating and financial management; and systems planning, research, development and engineering.*

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